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ABSTRACT

Current efforts of curriculum reform within the federal systems of Australia and the Federal Republic of Germany are examined in this paper. The hypothesis is that the federal systems of government, in which the allocation of powers is granted to subnational governments, create independent authorities and prevent the development of national curriculum policies. A historical overview of the responsibility for curriculum and current directions of curriculum policy formation in each country is presented. Each country has a different view of federalism in relation to curriculum policy formation: in Germany, individual states have sole responsibility for curriculum policy; in Australia, intact state policy structures are coordinated with a national curriculum effort. However, Germany has achieved significant national policy objectives since 1949 without a national coordinated effort. A second difference is the ways in which intergovernmental mechanisms operate. In Germany, such mechanisms operate as a forum for the exchange of information and ideas; in Australia, they are a way to advance the national policy position. Thus, Australia gives the appearance rather than the reality of national consistency, and Germany demonstrates that uncoordinated curriculum policy was not harmful. Public participation in curriculum determination is a significant issue despite the source of control. (LMI)

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CURRICULUM POLICY STRUCTURES IN FEDERAL SYSTEMS OF GOVERNMENT:

THE CASES OF AUSTRALIA AND GERMANY

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INTRODUCTION

Curriculum change and reform have been a preoccupation of many Western governments during the past decade . Very often the impulse has been motivated by forces outside of education - business groups, politicians and bureaucrats (Kennedy, 1991). It seems that the curriculum of schools is now viewed by governments as an instrument of public policy, a means for securing key government objectives. As McLean (1988, p.206) has put it, "the idea that state education is integrated organically into the nation state is as powerful as ever" .

There are numerous examples of this renewed interest in curriculum reform. Successive Conservative governments in Great Britain have gone about the process of reclaiming the education and training function in order to implement a massive reform program, including the adoption of a national curriculum and national assessment (Golby, 1985; McLean 1988, Lawton, 1991.) Rust and Blakemore (1990) have pointed to the historical development of a centralised education function in Norway and the way this has affected curriculum and assessment. Ironically, the specific measures adopted in Great Britain and Norway appear to be diametrically opposed. Common to both these examples, however, is a single central government with a legislative mandate for education. Such a mechanism significantly simplifies the process of initiating curriculum reform. Yet it is not a mechanism available to all governments as a recent report pointed out (OECD, 1987, p.69):

> *Although educational policy making is everywhere the concern of government, it must be kept in mind that responsibilities are often shared among various levels of authority as well as with non-profit and private organisations. The existence of private markets and profit-making institutions for some kinds of education tends to limit the role for public policy making even more.*

The problem described above is particularly relevant in Federal systems of government. Such systems very often have constitutionally designed mechanisms militating against the development of nationally consistent curriculum policies. These mechanisms usually have resulted in the historical allocation of powers and responsibilities for education to sub-national governments. Early writers on Federal systems seemed to suggest that this historical allocation of powers should be seen as the hallmark of federalism and that the independence of the different levels of government should be maintained at all costs (Wheare, 1946). If this were to be the case, there could be no national approaches to curriculum policy formation - curriculum policies would be developed solely at the sub-national level. Yet more recent writers have highlighted the importance of intergovernmental relations as a means of resolving

conflicts between levels of government and for ensuring a greater degree of policy consistency (Matthews, 1974;,Wiltshire, 1986). The latter view opens up the possibility of developing national approaches to curriculum policy formation within the confines of a Federal system of government.

Given the constitutional constraints facing Federal systems of government in relation to curriculum policy development and the current interest of many governments in using the curriculum of schools as an instrument of public policy, a project has been established to examine current efforts at curriculum reform in those systems. The research reported in this paper represents the first attempt to examine two Federal systems by using Australia and the Federal Republic of Germany as cases. It is expected that these cases will provide baseline data against which other similar systems will be studied in the future.

FEDERAL SYSTEMS OF GOVERNMENT IN AUSTRALIA AND GERMANY AND THE RESPONSIBILITY FOR CURRICULUM : AN HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

1 Australia

At the centre of Federal systems of government is a constitutional division of powers. In the case of Australia, for example, the Constitution, drawn up in the last decade of the nineteenth century, allocated "specific legislative powers to the commonwealth [sic Federal government] leaving the undefined residue to the states (Saunders, 1990, p.39). Since education,and hence curriculum, was not designated in the Constitution as a federal responsibility, it became the responsibility initially of six separate state governments. Subsequently the creation of two Territories has seen the number of jurisdictions responsible for curriculum provision increase to eight.

From 1901 to 1939 the Australian Federal system of government operated along classic lines in relation to curriculum policy determination. It was a state responsibility and educational bureaucracies developed in each jurisdiction to support the curriculum function.Birch (1977) has indicated that the 1940's witnessed some interest in a more proactive Federal role in education largely in the name of national security and largely related to universities. There was very little indication up to the early 1960's that the Federal government was willing to

accept any general responsibility for educational provision: it was clearly seen as a state responsibility.

Yet since that time, Federal government concern for education as a policy area outside of its constitutional jurisdiction has increased. The process by which such concern was translated into specific financial support has been well documented (Tannock, 1969; Birch and Smart, 1977; Birch, Hind and Tomlinson, 1979). Galligan,Hughes and Walsh (1991) have pointed to one of the major reasons that help explain Federal government intrusion and the form it has taken : vertical fiscal imbalance. The Federal government is the only one able to levy income tax and sub-national governments are prevented from levying sales tax. Ruby (1991) has pointed out that by the early 1970's it had become clear that educational funding needs were much greater than sub-national governments were able to meet. Thus between financial years 1971/72 and 1974/75 the Federal government's contribution to school level education increased from $220 million to over $ 1 billion (Ruby, 1991, p.6).

This massive increase in funding has continued to the present time and has resulted in the recognition that education is "a shared responsibility" between Federal and sub-national governments in Australia (Ruby, 1991, p.11) Yet specific curriculum policy remained marginal to these efforts until 1988. Many of the funding programs had significant implications for the curriculum, for example, multicultural education, transition education,the education of girls, country areas education, computer education, basic learning in primary schools and the professional development of teachers but funds were largely block granted to sub-national governments with little provision for any real intervention on the part of the Federal government. Even the establishment of a federal Curriculum Development Centre(CDC) in 1973 was more of a symbolic action than one designed to produce any real changes in the school curriculum. The creation of CDC clearly signalled an interest on the part of the Federal government in curriculum policy but CDC failed to become a significant policy instrument.

The period until 1988 might well be described as one in which the Federal government by virtue of its financial powers came to be accepted as a partner in the area of schools funding. Curriculum issues were addressed, but indirectly. With an educational partnership consolidated, and with the articulation of a policy position requiring substantial changes to the substance of the curriculum, the Federal government then moved to exert its influence more directly. The period from 1988 thus tells a new story about curriculum policy formation in Australia. It is a story in which formal curriculum policy structures remain with sub-national governments. At the same time, the Federal government encouraged the development of a new layer of curriculum policy formation that complements but also influences existing structures.

The Australian section of this paper will focus on describing this new layer of curriculum policy formation as it represents an attempt by a Federal government to revise and reshape the constitutional compact underpinning a Federal system.

2 Germany

As in Australia, there is a formal division of power between national and sub-national governments in the Federal Republic of Germany. The sixteen states (Lander), which constitute the Federal Republic have exclusive jurisdiction in school matters, as provided for under the Basic Law (Grundgesetz) and the state constitutions. Authoritative control includes the regulation of curriculum and time schedules, the recruitment of teachers and their professional requirements, the provision and maintenance of school buildings and equipment, materials and books. Each of the states has the right to enact its own education laws and policies and only a part of the system is co-ordinated by Federal law or Federal administration. The new states, formerly part of the German Democratic Republic, have adopted the legal structures prevailing in the West with only a few minor changes.

The origins of mass education in Germany were an integral part of the process of state building. It is for this reason that state authorities have developed a considerable power to regulate what happens in school (Hopmann 1988). Any lasting organisational or curriculum change which does not accord with or is not mentioned in the given laws and guidelines needs the support or at least approval of the responsible authorities. In particular, schools are not allowed to adopt curricula unless they have been approved by their state authorities. Yet, this does not mean that state authorities regulate the school system from above. There is a great deal of formal and informal interaction and co-ordination between schools and state educational administration. Under normal conditions the regulation of school development and improvement is managed as an interchange between administration and those who work in schools.

While constitutional authority for the curriculum has been allocated to the states, the general system of administration nevertheless allows for formal educational authority to be exercised at different levels. A review of these levels will indicate how authority is exercised at the different levels. (Max Plank Institute 1983; Riquarts, 1991).

1 The Federal Level

Following the tradition of the Prussian State Law of 1794, the Basic Law of the Federal Republic, adopted in 1949 and applied to the new states since October 1990, states in Article 7.1 that the "entire education system shall be under the supervision of the state". The states each have the responsibility of putting this constitutional principle into practice. The jurisdictional competence of the Federal authorities is mainly restricted to on-the-job-training as part of vocational education, the award of student loans and grants, the determination of guidelines for higher education, and the organisation and funding of research outside the university sector. There exists a joint commission of the Federal and state governments and it acts as a medium of cooperation. Its decisions are not binding and its influence on curriculum matters is mainly restricted to those cases where it decides upon financial grants or other incentives supporting research or school improvement programs.

The states co-ordinate their education policies through the Standing Conference of State Ministers of Education, (Kultusministerkonferenz). The task of this Conference is to ensure a minimum of uniformity in the school system, to secure mutual recognition of school exams and entrance qualifications, and to stipulate guidelines of policy making in areas of shared concern (for example, peace/military education; health education etc). The decisions of the Standing Conference are only legally binding if they are passed unanimously. This means, that in most cases compromise is only possible by reducing the issue to very broad and unspecified regulations. Fundamental issues are settled by state treaties.

There have been two periods in German history when attempts were made to exert greater national influence in educational policy. The first was under the Third Reich when the Nazis appointed the first national Minister of Education with all the powers that had traditionally been vested in the states. The post-1945 period witnessed a return to the Federal system. The second attempt came in 1965 when a Joint Commission on Educational Planning (Bund-Lander-Kommission fur Bildungsplanung) was established to develop a common policy on current structures and content of schooling, teacher qualifications and innovation development. It was not until 1973 that a document was produced but it was never implemented. Many of the reform efforts stemming from the Joint Commission had little impact. There have not been further attempts to create a more nationally unified approach to education (Haft and Hopmann, 1987).

2 The State Level

Each has its own Ministry of Education and Culture, usually with one or more school administration departments, and, where necessary, regional school boards. Following the sixties and seventies, all school matters of fundamental importance have to be regulated by law. Thus provisions under school law include:

- the length of compulsory education,
- the basic features of organisation and finance of the educational system,
- teachers' appointment and salaries,
- participation rights of the parents, teachers and pupils,
- participation rights of social groups and institutions, especially those of the churches and other religious groups (the last generally restricted to religious education),
- the rights and limits of private schooling,
- the powers of the inspectorate.

Within this framework and with respect to the co-ordinating Federal guidelines it is traditionally solely the state administration's responsibility to determine in particular

- the time-tables of individual school types,
- examination and promotion requirements,
- curriculum goals and contents,
- approval and use of textbooks,
- organisational rules and rites (e.g. the amount of home-work punishments etc).

The number of regulations passed by state administrations differs greatly depending on the state and the issue. In the field of curriculum development and control each state has at least guidelines concerning the subject matter in every school type and grade. Since 1949, more

than seven thousand separate syllabi have been issued for general education alone in the former Federal Republic of Germany. The new Germany with sixteen states will have around two thousand different syllabi in general education plus at least twice that number of curriculum guidelines in the various areas of special and compulsory education.

3 Intermediate or Local Level

Since the early nineteenth century in Germany a distinction has made between internal and external school matters. The former include all decisions regarding organisation and curriculum and are the responsibility of the state education authorities. External school matters, on the other hand, are the responsibility of the local authorities. They include the selection of school sites, the building, equipment and maintenance of schools, as well as the appointment and payment of non-teaching staff. In addition, the local authorities may, depending on individual state law, have some influence on the choice of headmasters or the number and types of schools to be available within their district. The school inspectorate is co-ordinated and organised at regional and local level by the state's authorities in close co-operation with the relevant local and regional bodies.

4 The School Level

The rights and obligations of school heads, teachers, parents and students are determined by law and by additional provisions of the educational administration. School heads and teachers are civil servants and thus bound to the directives of the education authorities. Like parents and students they have, however, certain rights to participate in and contest state-run decision making. These rights vary considerably from state to state.

Important decisions at school level are made by the School Conference, comprising the head teacher and representatives of the teachers, parents and students. In addition there are separate conferences for decisions pertaining to individual subjects or single grades or school levels. The scope a school has to organise its curriculum depends mainly on the number of decisions already made by state authorities and the degree to which teachers and heads make use of the opportunities they are given. Even though most states have been trying to extend the "educational freedom" of the teachers and schools, in most cases the leeway given in curriculum matters is not used to change the course of study substantially (Hopmann, 1991).

The situation with regard to private schools is slightly different. These schools, most of them organised by the church or minorities, have the right to make independent decisions concerning, for instance, curriculum, promotion rules or teacher recruitment. Their decisions are, however, subject to state control whether or not they fit into the framework set by the state's guidelines.

The formal division of powers, therefore, has been maintained in Germany and continues to operate today. Attempts to coordinate policy development at the Federal level have not to date been successful. Yet despite the diffusion of curriculum policy structures there is nevertheless a commonality in the formal mechanisms used by individual states to determine the curriculum. These mechanisms will be discussed in the remainder of the paper dealing with the Federal Republic of Germany for they demonstrate a classic Federal system of government in operation.

CURRICULUM POLICY FORMATION -

CURRENT DIRECTIONS IN AUSTRALIA AND GERMANY

1 Australia

After almost three decades of involvement in school level funding, the Federal government has adopted a new approach in regard to influencing the school curriculum which has been at once more direct and less related to funding issues.

There is little doubt that the driving force behind shaping a new philosophical agenda for the curriculum of Australian schools was the Federal Minister for Employment, Education and Training. His objectives were made very clear soon after he took office when he issued a major policy paper, *Skills for Australia* (Dawkins, 1987, pp.8-9) :

> *A high quality basic education is an essential prerequisite for a vocationally skilled and adaptable labour force. More needs to be known about the levels of competence achieved by our students at school, especially in the core disciplines of language, mathematics andscience...We also need to examine new ways to impart less measurable skills on which future prosperity depends - life-time*

> *learning, enterprise and initiative, pursuit of excellence, communication skills, team work and responsibility. In other words, we need to lay the foundations of a productive culture.*

This position was reiterated in a subsequent paper, *Strengthening Australia's Schools*, that focussed more directly on policy directions relating to curriculum and schools. Schooling was portrayed as central to the process of economic and social adjustment being pursued by the government (Dawkins, 1988, p 2) :

> *Schools are the starting point of an integrated education and training structure in the economy. They provide the foundation on which a well-informed, compassionate and cohesive society is built. They also form the basis of a more highly skilled,adaptive and productive workforce. As skill upgrading and retraining of adults becomes more necessary, so will the quality and nature of schooling received by individuals need to change. It will need to be more adaptable and prepare for lifelong education. We meed to ensure that every young Australian gets a general education of quality which provides both personal and intellectual development as well as broadly based and adaptable skills.*

This is the platform on which efforts to reform the school curriculum were built by the Federal government from mid-1988 onwards. It publicly signalled a change of philosophical direction in the Federal government's approach to schooling and the curriculum. It was more openly instrumental with strong managerial perspectives compared to the more humanistic/progressive approaches of previous governments. Yet it was not altogether new - it is possible to identify a growing instrumentalism in curriculum policy during the first and second Hawke governments when Senator Susan Ryan was the Federal Minister for Education (Kennedy, 1990). The difference is, that under Minister Dawkins instrumentalism became the driving force for curriculum reform in Australian schools.

It is one thing for a Federal Minister to articulate a philosophical rationale for curriculum reform it is yet another to develop a program and implement it when policy directions and not funds are being offered. The strategy adopted by the Federal government was to have the Prime Minister write to the respective heads of sub-national governments inviting them to join the Federal government in an effort " to strengthen Australia's schools". This invitation was accepted by all heads of government and the process of curriculum reform was initiated.

There is nevertheless the problem in a Federal system of an appropriate forum in which such issues might be pursued. To resolve this problem, mechanisms have been developed to facilitate intergovernmental relations. In particular, the use of ministerial councils has proven a popular means by which executive members of governments with similar responsibilities have been brought together to debate issues and determine common courses of action. Between 1966 and 1986 the number of these councils more than doubled (Sharman,1991, p.30) It was just such a mechanism, in the form of the Australian Education Council that was used to pursue the agenda for curriculum reform.

The Australian Education Council (AEC) was established in 1936 as a forum for Ministers for Education from sub-national governments. In 1972, the Federal Minister for Education became a member and since that time the AEC "has become dominated by the need to respond to Commonwealth [sic Federal government] agendas in education" (Spaull, 1987, p.312) Spaull (1987) has pointed out that for the most part the AEC has not been concerned with curriculum issues apart from the monitoring of national curriculum proposals in the 1970's, basic skills testing in the early 1980's and criticism of the Federal government's Curriculum Development Centre in the mid-1980's.

This situation changed in July 1988 when the Federal Minister of the newly created mega-portfolio of Employment Education and Training convened a Special Meeting of Ministers to consider the proposals he had put forward in *Strengthening Australia's Schools*. The curriculum proposals were initially referred to a standing committee composed of Directors of Curriculum from each sub-national government along with officers of the Federal government. Eventually the AEC established an expanded Curriculum and Assessment Committee as one its own sub-committees. In both forums, the Federal government's curriculum policy agenda was pursued with considerable vigor. Almost four years down the track, what has been achieved ?

- Agreement has been reached on eight core curriculum areas: English, Mathematics, Technology, Science, The Arts, Study of Society and the Environment, Health and Physical Education and Languages other than English.

- Extensive reviews of existing curriculum areas have been undertaken and national curriculum statements are now in preparation for each of the identified core curriculum areas.

- *A National Statement on Mathematics for Australian Schools* has been produced and distributed to all Australian schools.

- Subject profiles are also to be produced for each curriculum area to provide for more standardized approaches to students assessment.

These may appear to be significant achievements in a relatively short time. Yet inherent in them is an acknowledgment that while sub-national governments have worked cooperatively with the Federal government in developing common curriculum statements, that legislative authority for the curriculum remains with sub-national governments rather than the Federal government.

Take, for example, the publication of *A National Statement on Mathematics for Australian Schools*. It is not exactly clear what is going to happen to it now that it has been disseminated to schools. In a report from the Project Steering Committee the following points were made (Eltis, 1990, pp 4 - 5):

> *...the document will be used as a reference point for reviewing curriculum advice on school Mathematics.*
>
> *(there was) recognition that the primary audience for the Professional Development will be those responsible at School System and Regional level for providing curriculum development and advice, and support for schools.*
>
> *(there was) agreement that each school system should provide a statement to accompany the professional Document linking it to advice currently provided in school mathematics, intended directions within that school system, professional development programs for teachers and procedures for assessing students' learning.*

This does not sound like an implementation strategy that will see every school in Australia dropping its existing mathematics curriculum and adopting the *National Statement on Mathematics for Australian Schools*. It seems that the document will be used as an adjunct to existing curricula rather than as a substitute for them. Such a view was expressed by the New South Wales Director of Curriculum at a national seminar held in Melbourne (Eltis, 1989, p.9):

> *It would be possible for systems to decide to develop national guidelines for particular areas of the curriculum based on current practice (as described in further mapping exercises), recent research and theory, and these guidelines could then be used as reference points for systems as they develop their own*

> *curriculum documents. In this process the search for quality would take on a new dimension in Australian education. (p.9)*

This seems like exactly the fate of the *National Statement on Mathematics for Australian Schools*. If this is correct, it means a that Australia has adopted an approach to national curriculum policy formation that has kept the essential elements of the Federal system in tact.The potential is certainly there for national curriculum statements to exert a significant influence but it will not happen without the consent of education system authorities. This is a considerable modifying influence on any attempt at a national curriculum for Australian schools along the lines of that which has been introduced into the United Kingdom.

These limitations are also constrained by the fact that professional groups have not been particularly supportive of national curriculum initiatives. Consultative mechanisms relating to national curriculum development have been criticised extensively. The President of the Australian Mathematical Sciences Council wrote to the Director-General of Education in New South Wales [an Australian state] in May of this year pointing out that the Council had objected to the way in which the *National Statement on Mathematics for Australian Schools* had been developed. In particular, he rejected the short timelines that were given for responses to the draft document and lack of involvement from the beginning of the process. He was even more opposed to the new work being done on assessment profiles and called 'for a halt to work on the project so that proper planning and consultation could take place' (McTaggert, 1991). In July, the President of the Australian Association of Environmental Education wrote to the Chair of the Directors of Curriculum urging him "to involve stakeholders such as major national organisations ..in the development of briefs for the various national statements and profiles". In the same month, the Executive Officer of the Australian Curriculum Studies Association pointed out at a national conference in Canberra (Cumming, 1991):

> *While it is acknowledged that the process ofconsultation has improved from the initial curriculum mapping exercises in 1989 to the development of national curriculum statements in 1990-91, it is important to recognise that large sections of the community still feel very much excluded from this process. Many teachers, parents and teacher educators expressed frustration at not having ready access to information, and felt by-passed in what they considered to be critical developments in the processes of teaching and learning in Australian schools.*

The achievements described so far must be seen as limited in terms of creating a single national curriculum and of having any large measure of support from the education profession. What has been achieved so far has been done so through the intergovernmental mechanism of the AEC. Yet more recently another similar mechanism has entered the field of national curriculum policy formation in the form of the Council of Ministers for Vocational Education, Employment and Training (MOVEET). A report entitled *Young People's Participation in Post-Compulsory Education and Training* has recommended that both "the AEC and MOVEET endorse (six) Key Areas of Competence as essential for all young people engaged in post-compulsory education and training" (Finn, 1991,p.11) The report has also recommended that 'all States/Territories develop valid and publicly credible, nationally comparable ways of assessing young people's attainments in terms of the National Competence profile in the (six) areas" (Finn,1991, p.13). As the result of these recommendations a further committee has been set up to develop the concept of key competency areas and appropriate assessment procedures. A preliminary report has been issued by the committee (Mayer, 1992) and a final report is expected in June 1992.

Whatever the outcome of the AEC and joint AEC/MOVEET exercises one thing is clear. National curriculum policy making has become a significant part of the national education agenda in Australia. Sub-national governments may still retain final decisionmaking authority when it comes to curriculum but the real policy agenda now appears to be driven through intergovernmental mechanisms. This is a variant of federalism that accepts the interdependence rather than the independence of the different levels of government. Nevertheless there is still evidence of an independent streak in sub-national governments on the issue of curriculum policy formation since they have not yet agreed to abandon their own curriculum directorates or to accept the products of national curriculum development in place of their own. What is possibly being seen at the moment in Australia is a transition period in which the vestiges of an older competitive federalism have not yet entirely disappeared and the benefits of a more cooperative federalism have yet to be clearly demonstrated. The issue will be one of particular interest when the current AEC/MOVEET initiatives come to fruition later in the year.

Germany

Even though there exists an incredible number of state guidelines and syllabi concerning the curriculum, most of these regulations are made within a very simple and stable pattern. Following an officially guided deliberation process on educational policy in general or on principles of curriculum making in a distinct area, the Ministry of Education or its administration appoints commissions to produce a draft of the new syllabus. The proposed

draft version is subject to a hearing or a limited call for comments and minor administrative tuning. After one or two years of practical testing, the new syllabus can be implemented (Hopmann, 1991).

The process described above is outlined below in simplified form:

1.Preliminary deliberation by administration	--->	2.Installment of a commission by administration	--->	3.Draft production by commissions	--->	4.Public comments by professionals and the public	--->	5.Implementation by administration

Nowadays this process takes five to six years on average, around fifteen thousand working hours of the members of an average commission of seven. At least ten organisations will have commented upon the draft version before it is enacted, and the involved agencies from parliamentary committees to INSET-institutes will have produced a number of related papers and activities. A cautious estimation would be that in the eleven states of the former Federal Republic permanently between four and five thousand people spend a considerable amount of their working hours with curriculum development. A count including all steps of preparation and implementation would at least double this number". (Hopmann 1991, 13). The new states stemming from the former GDR are now adopting step by step this traditional pattern of curriculum making.

The commissions play a significant role in curriculum development. They usually consist of five to ten members, chosen and appointed by the state authorities. It is the commission's responsibility to check the former syllabus, to develop and formulate alternative, to propose changes in structure, goals and content, in short: to make the new curriculum.

Almost all members of such commissions are teachers or former teachers who are now in advanced positions as heads or supervisors). Except for commissions dealing with vocational education, scientists and representatives of parents and students are welcome in only very few cases. At best, around twenty percent of the commission members will have professional experience from outside the educational field. This is different only in commissions dealing with the job-related parts of vocational education. In these commissions, employer associations and the unions are represented.

Once the commissions are appointed, the state administration rarely intervenes in the work of the commission members. The only things fixed in advance are general rules of conduct and preliminary statements of curriculum policy which have come out of the preceding stages of public or political deliberation. Following the experiences of commission members, these rules and statements do not have a considerable impact on the syllabus draft. As the draft versions are normally subject to minor changes only, one cannot overestimate the impact of the commissions on the written curriculum: they are the curriculum makers. On the other hand, being experienced teachers and depending on the consent of their colleagues, commission members take notice of what is going on inside schools and the administration. Thus, most changes applied by commissions are nothing more than official notifications of changes with which most teachers and administrators of the same subject are already familiar.

The work of the commissions is supported by the respective state administrations and, in most states, by specialised state institutes for curriculum development and/or inservice teacher training. These institutes were established in the sixties and seventies as a response to the challenges traditional curriculum making was facing because of ever increasing social and technological changes. They were meant as a state based alternative to scientific curriculum making (Frey 1982). Although a great deal of the staff members work on a part-time basis, spending the rest of their working hours as teachers in school, most institutes have more resources to enhance research and communication, to disseminate and evaluate new curriculum materials than average university institutes. But their influence on the written curriculum is not formally guaranteed. It depends more or less on the ability of its staff to become members of the curriculum commissions. If they are not directly involved in the work of a commission, their influence depends on the good will of the commission members and this cannot always be taken for granted.

Unlike many English speaking countries, curriculum making is done within a well defined administrative framework - and not at universities or other non-administrative institutions. These institutions may contribute proposals and ideas. Yet, formally, their part is not bigger than that of any citizen putting proposals forward into public deliberation. Naturally, commissions rely on such proposals and ideas if they want to change the current syllabus. The impact of preliminary deliberations and external proposals the work of curriculum commissions should not be overestimated. Members of commissions or state authorities must adopt these proposals if they are to become part of the prescribed curriculum.

Different institutions and community groups exert varying kinds of influence on the curriculum making process (Hopmann, 1988; Hopmann, Haft and Frey, 1989). A summary is provided below.

- The churches have the easiest access to curriculum making because their right to intervene is guaranteed by constitution and law. It is disputed whether or not this right is limited to religious education alone or includes other areas of the curriculum as well. Practically the churches do no interfere except in cases of fundamental religious values (for example, sex education and political history). There is no public contest comparable to the debate on evolution in the US.

- The state parliament is the only other organisation with formal access to curriculum making because the Minister for Education may be held accountable by the parliament and because the parliament has to approve all fundamental principles of schooling (like the differentiation of school types, the parent's and the student's right to participate etc). In particular, the right of the administration to issue syllabi has to be legally established. However, for practical purposes, parliaments have a small impact on curriculum making. Plenty of leeway is provided to allow for the use of a range of curriculum models. Since 1850 there have been numerous attempts by parliamentarians to take control of the curriculum and place it with parliamentary committees. Except for one tiny state, the town of Bremen, all such attempts have failed.

- Officially, political parties do not have an impact on curriculum making except through their representatives in the parliament. Yet, political parties in power believe that they exert a considerable impact while opposition parties are more inclined to argue that there should be no influence whatsoever from political parties. It seems clear that parties in power do exert some influence but most people involved in curriculum making would agree that curriculum making is and should be a pedagogical and not a political issue.

- Normally, parents have no direct access to curriculum making on state level, but they are indirectly involved. Almost all states have established consultatative bodies, either as specialised parent organisations and/or as chairs of a state school board, in which parents, teachers, students and social organisations like unions and employer organisations are represented. These boards and bodies have to be informed about every major change in school laws and curriculum design. In case of dissent, they may object in a hearing or in public. In some states, an official objection put forward by

the state organisation of parents acts like a veto, which eventually has to be annulled by a decision of the whole state cabinet.

- The formal status of the students' organisations is equivalent to that of the parents, except for the fact that their objections are not able to act as a veto. In some states, state wide students organisations have to be heard in any case of fundamental change in school regulations or curriculum. Yet, in general, students do not see themselves as having a great influence on the curriculum.

- Formally unions and employer organisations have limited access to curriculum making concerning general education: Except for their participation in consultative bodies and the right every citizen has to comment upon public decision making, they do not have other institutionalized ways to influence the curriculum. This is somewhat different in the field of vocational education. Here representatives of both groups are normally invited to take part in the work of the commissions. These groups probably exert more influence on the curriculum by political lobbying and their influence is thus limited by the extent to which political decision making impacts on the curriculum. Both groups see their own impact as being small but are incline to argue that the influence of the other is too great.

- An intermediate position is taking by the teacher organisations and unions. Formally, their influence is not greater than that of other unions or of the partners. Practically it is much bigger, because most members of curriculum commissions are members of one or more of these organisations and unions (depending on school type and level up to ninety percent of all teachers are unionised). Yet, small associations of subject teachers are more important in curriculum affairs than are the general unions and associations. These are state or nation-wide organisations of teachers and educators of the same subject (for example, associations of science teachers and history teachers including the respective university teachers). Traditionally, members of curriculum committees are chosen among the leading ranks of these associations, and draft versions of new syllabi are presented and discussed inside their meetings. Probably, subject associations represent the most powerful influence on curriculum making(Hopmann 1988).

AUSTRALIA AND GERMANY : SOME POINTS OF COMPARISON

As Federal systems of government, Australia and Germany have adopted differing views of federalism in relation to curriculum policy formation. In Germany, the classic model upholding a strict division of powers has been retained so that individual states have maintained sole responsibility for curriculum policy. While there is an intergovernmental mechanism in the Standing Conference of State Ministers for Education, it has played very little role in influencing the curriculum. In Australia, state curriculum policy structures have remained intact but a new national level has been added through the use of active intergovernmental mechanisms. This reflects the development of a more dynamic model of federalism. In such a model, the formal allocation of constitutional powers is overridden in the name of new national priorities. The assumption is that these priorities can be better met by by a more coordinated national curriculum effort.

The efficacy of coordinated approaches may now be questioned.The fact that Germany has been able to achieve significant national objectives since 1949 with an uncoordinated curriculum policy effort throws some doubt on the efficacy or necessity of adopting a more dynamic model of federalism. The fact that national curriculum efforts in Australia have run into such opposition from the education profession is perhaps also an indication that citizens in a federal system have certain expectations about the locus of curriculum decisionmaking and are therefore mistrustful of any apparent usurpation of power. It may well be that the constitutional division of powers is also part of the cultural make-up of citizens in a federal system - good reasons are needed if that culture is to be challenged.

It is of interest to note that the rationale for national curriculum action in Australia has been linked to the needs of the economy. Yet it is well known that the German economy remains one of the strongest in the world even after the incorporation of the former East Germany. State rather than Federal control of curriculum policy has contributed to, or at least not detracted from, this achievement. The Australian government may be better advised to pay more attention to macro-economic policy rather than assuming that micro-economic policy such as curriculum reform can bring about the kind of changes that are needed to transform the Australian economy.

Both Australia and the Federal Republic of Germany have made use of intergovernmental mechanisms to overcome some of the structural problems of a Federal system. Germany's use of the Kultusministerkonferenz has in no way infringed the constitutional compact - it has acted as a forum for the exchange of ideas and information and for agreement on common action in areas such as university entrance. Yet the Australian Education Council and more

recently the Ministers of Vocational Education, Employment and Training in Australia have been used as forums in which to advance a quite aggressive curriculum policy position on the part of the Federal Labor government. A number of issues has been raised about the use of intergovernmental mechanisms (Saunders, 1991; Sharman, 1991; Galligan, Hughes and Walshe, 1991)and in particular the extent to which such mechanisms take decisionmaking authority out of the hands of democratically elected parliaments. This would seem to be a useful area for future investigation given that there appears to be no accountability for the actions of intergovernmental mechanisms.

Given the use which the Australian government appears to see for a nationally consistent curriculum, the extent to which any real achievement has been made on national coordination of curriculum policy must be questioned. State policy structures are still in tact and there is little evidence that national curriculum statements will supplant state developed documents. Thus there is the appearance rather than the reality of national consistency. On the other hand in Germany, there is a common process in all the states for the development of curriculum and this process seems to have produced a situation that has not disadvantaged the country socically or economically. There is an irony here that deserves further study : uncoordinated curriculum policy development cannot be demonstrated to be harmful in any way. Indeed, using Germany as an example, exactly the opposite could undoubtedly be demonstrated.

Participation in curriculum determination remains a significant issue whether control comes from state or Federal governments. The elaborate methods used in Germany indicate the public nature of curriculum determination and the desire of interest groups to be involved. Recent experience in Australia with national curriculum initiatives also supports the need for widespread participation. While governments have ultimate constitutional and legislative responsibility for curriculum they are answerable to the public for their actions. In this sense Federal systems are no different from other systems of government. It is of interest to note, however, that when a Federal system of government such as that in Australia attempts to change curriculum policy structures there is no change in the demand for that system to remain open to participation and involvement on the part of professional educators.

CONCLUSION

Federal systems of government in which education is a sub-national responsibility are designed to diversify curriculum policy formation. The German case described here has demonstrated exactly how that process works. Ultimate responsibility for curriculum remains with the states and the Federal government plays very little role. The Australian case demonstrates a much more assertive role being played by the Federal government in attempting to work cooperatively with the States in developing a nationally consistent approach to curriculum. The two cases respectively are an indication of classic and dynamic approaches to the chief characteristic of federalism : a constitutional division of powers. Intergovernmental mechanisms can be used in Federal systems to overcome the perceived limitations of multiple curriculum jurisdictions and this has happened in Australia but only in a very limited way in Germany. Yet the efficacy of such an approach must be questioned. What has Australia achieved that Germany has not? Diversity in curriculum policy formation as demonstrated in Germany seems to have served the nation well. Thus while it is possible to subvert or adapt the principles of federalism, the question remains as to whether the output makes the effort worthwhile. From a broader policy perspective, it simply may be that the objectives trying to be achieved by the Australian government through curriculum reform are unrealistic : it is not the curriculum that needs to be transformed as much as the Australian economy itself. If this is the case, it matters not whether the curriculum is determined at the Federal or state level. If anything, the case of Germany would seem to support multiple sites for curriculum policy formation which means the Australian government should perhaps rethink its current curriculum policy strategy.

Finally, it needs to be acknowledged that the institutional frameworks for curriculum policy formation discussed in this paper, tell only part of the story related to the curriculum of schools. As Kunzli (1980) has pointed out there is a distinction between state-wide curriculum planning and local instructional planning. Given basic content and curriculum goals, teachers must decide how these goals can best be achieved. Curriculum policy framers need to be aware of the way teachers go about this process for the success of policy initiatives will in the end depend on the way classroom teachers translate policy into practice. It has been suggested that the science of "Didaktik" can be used to bridge the gap between different levels of planning (Hopmann, 1992). This seems well worth exploring given the multi-level decisionmaking structures in Federal systems of government. It maybe one way of ensuring that on-going dialogue between policy makers and practitioners will yield maximum benefits for students in classrooms. Without such dialogue, policy initiatives from any source will have little chance of success.

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